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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

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a
Claims 1-56 (cancelled).

57. (currently amended) A method for managing a call from a caller to an information assistance service, the method comprising:

receiving information concerning a first calling area associated with the call;

eliciting from the caller an information assistance request;

searching a database for results responsive to the information assistance request, the results including a destination telephone number;

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determining whether a connection from the first calling area to a second calling area indicated by the destination telephone number ~~incurs charges~~ entails a service of a selected type;

determining whether the caller is authorized to have the connection which entails the service of the selected type made through the information assistance service based on a status of an account associated with the caller; and

making the connection when it is determined that the caller is authorized to have the connection made which ~~incurs charges~~ entails the service of the selected type.

58. (previously added) The method of claim 57 wherein the first calling area is different from the second calling area.

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59. (previously added) The method of claim 58 wherein the connection includes a long distance connection.

60. (previously added) The method of claim 57 wherein the information assistance service is provided by an operator.

61 (cancelled).

62. (currently amended) A method for managing a call from a caller to an information assistance service, the method comprising:

receiving information concerning a calling telephone number associated with the call;

eliciting from the caller an information assistance request;

in response to the information assistance request searching a database for a destination telephone number;

determining whether a connection between a calling station from which the call originates to a called station associated with the destination telephone number ~~incurs charges~~ entails a service of a selected type based on a comparison of at least a portion of the calling telephone number with at least a portion of the destination telephone number;

determining whether the caller is authorized to have the connection which entails the service of the selected type made through the information assistance service based on a status of an account associated with the caller; and

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connecting a calling station to the called station when it is determined that the caller is authorized to have the connection made which ~~incurs charges~~ entails a service of a selected type.

63. (previously added) The method of claim 62 wherein the information includes an automatic numbering identification (ANI).

64. (previously added) The method of claim 62 wherein the portion of the calling telephone number indicates a first calling area, and the portion of the destination telephone number indicates a second calling area different from the first calling area.

65. (previously added) The method of claim 64 wherein the connection includes a long distance connection.

66. (previously added) The method of claim 62 wherein the information assistance service is provided by an operator.

67 (cancelled).

68. (currently amended) A method of providing an information assistance service to a customer, comprising:

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receiving signals in setting up a call from the customer through an inbound channel;
based on the received signals, identifying a calling telephone number associated with a
calling station from which the customer calls;

eliciting an information assistance request from the customer;

in response to the information assistance request, searching a database for a destination
telephone number;

determining whether a connection from a first calling area indicated by the calling
telephone number to a second calling area indicated by the destination telephone number
entails a service of a selected type, by comparing the first calling area indicated by the calling
telephone number with the second calling area indicated by the destination telephone
number;

determining whether the customer is authorized to ~~be connected to the destination
telephone number~~ have the connection which entails the service of the selected type made,
based on at least a result of the comparison;

allocating an outbound channel to establish a connection to the destination telephone
number when it is determined that the customer is authorized to ~~be connected to the
destination telephone number~~ have the connection made which entails the service of the
selected type;

dialing the destination telephone number over the outbound channel; and
connecting the inbound channel to the outbound channel.

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69. (currently amended) The method of claim 68 wherein the received signals contain information concerning an ANI.

70. (previously added) The method of claim 68 wherein whether the customer is authorized to be connected to the destination telephone number is determined also based on a status of an account associated with the caller when the first calling area is different from the second calling area.

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71 (cancelled)

72. (previously added) The method of claim 68 wherein the information assistance service is provided by an operator.

73. (currently amended) A system for managing a call from a caller to an information assistance service, the system comprising:

an interface for receiving information concerning a first calling area associated with the call, an information assistance request being elicited from the caller;

a database for looking up results responsive to the information assistance request, the results including a destination telephone number;

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a processor for determining whether a connection from the first calling area to a second calling area indicated by the destination telephone number ~~incurs charges~~ entails a service of a selected type;

a controller for determining whether the caller is authorized to have the connection which entails the service of the selected type made through the information assistance service based on a status of an account associated with the caller; and

a switching device for making the connection when it is determined that the caller is authorized to have the connection made which ~~incurs charges~~ entails the service of the selected type.

74. (previously added) The system of claim 73 wherein the first calling area is different from the second calling area.

75. (previously added) The system of claim 74 wherein the connection includes a long distance connection.

76. (previously added) The system of claim 73 wherein the information assistance service is provided by an operator.

77 (cancelled).